

## **Historic, archived document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.





United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Office of  
Governmental  
and Public Affairs

# Major News Releases and Speeches

Dec. 17 - Dec. 24, 1982

## IN THIS ISSUE:

### News Releases—

Block Approves \$18 Million Budget for Cotton Research and Promotion

Minnesota Animal Dealer Pays \$500 Fine After Reindeer Die in Transit

WR Wool Research Changes Announced

Vesicular Stomatitis Continues to Spread to New States

Indianapolis Airport Approved for Livestock Exports

10 Million Needy People Received Free Cheese and Butter in 1982

Grazing Fees Lowered on Western National Forests and Grasslands

Sugar Import Fee to Remain at Zero for First Quarter 1983

November Food Prices Decline

USDA Proposes Rules for Feeding Mexican Cattle in U.S. Feedlots

Hearings Set on Proposed Pecan Marketing Order

USDA Announces Wool and Mohair Support Prices for 1983

USDA Proposes Exempting Rendering Plants From Garbage Treatment Regulations

Hidalgo, Texas, Named Port of Entry for Pet Birds



# News Releases

---

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Governmental and Public Affairs

---

## **BLOCK APPROVES \$18 MILLION BUDGET FOR COTTON RESEARCH AND PROMOTION**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block today approved a 1983 producer-funded budget of \$18 million for a cotton research and promotion program.

This program is authorized under the Cotton Research and Promotion Act and is administered by a 20-member cotton board appointed by the secretary of agriculture.

The 1983 budget allocates about 25 percent of the funds to research activities and about 75 percent to market development and advertising.

Research and promotion programs are designed to strengthen the competitive position of cotton and expand its uses. Approved projects are carried out by Cotton Incorporated, a producer organization under contract to the cotton board.

The program is funded entirely by producer assessments averaging about \$2 per bale.

C.W. McMillan, assistant secretary of agriculture for marketing and inspection services, said the program has provided the industry with many tools for competing with synthetic fibers and maintaining cotton's share of the textile market.

#

## **MINNESOTA ANIMAL DEALER PAYS \$500 FINE AFTER REINDEER DIE IN TRANSIT**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17—Robert Troumbly, in business as Northland Wildlife of Bovey, Minn., has agreed to pay a \$500 fine to settle a U.S. Department of Agriculture charge that he violated federal transportation standards during a shipment that resulted in the death of 11 reindeer.



Wien Air Alaska, which carried a shipment of 17 reindeer for Troumbly from Nome, Alaska, on July 2, 1980, had already paid a \$500 penalty.

Dr. Richard Rissler, veterinarian in charge of animal care work in the field for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said, "This is the first case in which a shipper and an airline both paid fines in connection with the same alleged violation of the Animal Welfare Act.

"This demonstrates that proper care for traveling animals is a shared responsibility."

Although two of the 11 reindeer that died were examined by a veterinarian afterwards, the exact cause of death could not be established, Rissler said, but that USDA investigators found the crates in which the reindeer had been shipped lacked adequate ventilation. The crates also didn't have projecting rims or spacer devices to keep ventilation openings from being blocked.

Rissler said that the crates also lacked handholds or devices to move the animals without tilting the crates. There were no written feeding or watering instructions with the shipment, and the crates did not have the required "live animal" markings, he said.

To settle the USDA charge, Troumbly used a provision of administrative law that permits him to accept a fine and a cease-and-desist order from an administrative law judge without admitting or denying the charge. The order is a type of permanent injunction; future violations can result in fines up to \$500 for each day a violation occurs.

#

## **WOOL RESEARCH CHANGES ANNOUNCED**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17—Some wool research equipment no longer needed at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's laboratory in Albany, Calif., will be transferred to Texas A&M University's Research and Extension Center at San Angelo, Texas.

Orville G. Bentley, assistant secretary of agriculture for USDA's science and education agencies, said today relocation of the equipment

to San Angelo, "will ensure its fullest possible use in furtherance of animal fibers research."

Bentley said factors determining the relocation decision included the existence and potential for a substantial scientific program involved with breeding, nutrition, production and processing research.

Other factors, said Bentley, were assurance that suitable facilities will be made available to house the equipment; the assurance that industry will provide tangible support and contribute to a collaborative program; location of the research program close to a major sheep production center and the existence of an extension capability to bring research concerns from the sheep and goat producers and to carry research results to them.

Equipment includes carding and scouring machinery and related equipment.

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture desires a strong wool research program in support of our sheep and goat industry," Bentley said. "We believe we can achieve a strong program for wool and mohair by working together with industry and interested research institutions."

#

## **VESICULAR STOMATITIS CONTINUES TO SPREAD TO NEW STATES**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—Despite cold weather, vesicular stomatitis has continued to spread to livestock in two new states—Missouri and California—a U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today.

"This latest spread seems to be due to movement of cattle from Colorado after a dairy dispersal sale," said John Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

In Missouri, a dairy herd became infected and milk production was reduced by about 30 percent. In Colorado, a beef herd was removed from its mountain pasture and came down with vesicular stomatitis 10 days after being brought to its winter feeding area.

"Eventually, 95 percent of this beef herd became infected," Atwell said. "Since these cattle were on snow-covered ground, we think the

disease spread from the infected animals through the feed, water and/or salt-mineral blocks."

Atwell said USDA diagnosticians have investigated possible vesicular disease reports on 829 farms and ranches since early June. Of these, 526 have been diagnosed as vesicular stomatitis in the laboratory.

"There are at least 10 new samples at the laboratory for testing now," he said.

"Vesicular stomatitis is a transitory disease that is not usually dangerous. However, it is very costly when milk production is reduced by a third or beef cattle lose 100 pounds or more," he said.

USDA veterinarians are conducting field studies on at least 15 recently infected herds in hopes of finding out more about how the disease is spread and the effects of the disease within the infected herds.

Atwell said vesicular stomatitis is thought to be spread by mosquitoes and biting flies and is usually detected only during summer months.

USDA is concerned, Atwell said, because, in the field, vesicular stomatitis looks very much like foot-and-mouth disease. Thus, a more serious disease could go undetected unless each affected herd is tested.

"All livestock owners should report any vesicular condition to their veterinarians," Atwell said. "Symptoms include blisters on the mouth, tongue, teats, hoofs and other exposed skin areas.

In addition to cattle, vesicular stomatitis affects horses, swine, sheep, goats, dogs, wildlife and humans.

In 1982, the outbreak appears to have started in Central America, moved up through Mexico, invaded Arizona in June, and continued up the intermountain states to also affect livestock in New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, South Dakota and Montana.

#



## **INDIANAPOLIS AIRPORT APPROVED FOR LIVESTOCK EXPORTS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials have approved the Indianapolis International Airport, Indianapolis, Ind., as a port for exporting livestock.

Dr. Paul H. Kramer, veterinarian in charge in Indiana for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the airport's livestock handling facilities meet all USDA criteria.

"Federal animal health regulations require that exit ports have safe, sanitary facilities adequate for holding and inspecting animal shipments," Kramer said.

Other requirements include adequate feed, water and shelter; lighted examination areas with restraining equipment; and safe, sanitary pens, gates, walkways and ramps.

USDA officials anticipate that about 35 livestock shipments per year will be exported through the Indianapolis facilities. There are now 24 approved ports according to Kramer, with the nearest alternative to Indianapolis being Chicago, Ill., about 250 miles away.

Public comments may be submitted until Feb. 21, to the Deputy Administrator for Veterinary Service, APHIS, USDA, Room 870 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Notice of this action is scheduled to be published in the Dec. 22 Federal Register.

#

## **10 MILLION NEEDY PEOPLE RECEIVED FREE CHEESE AND BUTTER IN 1982**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—After one year of operation, the special distribution of surplus dairy products has reached nearly 10 million needy people, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said today. So far, USDA has delivered to states more than 135 million pounds of cheese and 8.2 million pounds of butter, valued at \$275 million.

"States and local groups have done an outstanding job of delivering the surplus dairy products nationwide," Block said. "The combined federal, state and local effort demonstrates a commendable can-do

approach. By the end of December most of the cheese we released last year will be delivered or will be on its way."

Block said distribution of the surplus cheese and butter will continue through December 1983.

He stressed the need for continued involvement of the private sector and volunteers in the distribution. He said as more volunteer organizations become aware of the available benefits, they will step forward and join the effort.

"Only through the support of volunteer organizations can we ensure that low income people in every community have maximum opportunity to benefit from this program," he said.

The dairy products are bought under the federal dairy price support program. Last December, when the cheese distribution program started, USDA held in uncommitted inventory a total of about 570 million pounds of cheese valued at about \$832 million and 206 million pounds of butter valued at \$322 million. Currently USDA is holding in uncommitted inventory about 776 million pounds of cheese valued at about \$1 billion and about 368 million pounds of butter worth about \$500 million.

"Despite our concerted efforts to increase utilization of dairy commodities, uncommitted inventories could increase to as much as 675 million pounds of butter and 1.1 billion pounds of cheese at the end of fiscal year 1983, Block said. "The increasing size of the inventories makes it imperative that we do all we can to use these surpluses."

In addition to the special distribution, other domestic uses for surplus cheese include a variety of USDA food assistance programs, such as the national school lunch and the charitable institutions programs. In fiscal year 1982 USDA distributed a total of 1.6 billion pounds of donated commodities, worth over \$1 billion.

#

## **GRAZING FEES LOWERED ON WESTERN NATIONAL FORESTS AND GRASSLANDS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—Livestock grazing fees on national forests and national grasslands in 17 western states will be reduced next year, R. Max Peterson, chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, said today.

Peterson said the 1983 grazing fees will be \$1.45 per animal unit month, 41 cents less than in 1982, on national forests and grasslands in Idaho and Oregon and on national forests in Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

The grazing value for national grasslands in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming will be \$2.86 per month, 48 cents less than in 1982.

An animal unit month is the grazing of one cow, one horse or five sheep for one month.

Peterson said grazing fees are determined by a formula established in the Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. The formula, which is being used on a seven-year trial basis, considers rates for leasing private grazing lands, the difference between total costs of grazing on public and private lands, beef cattle prices and the costs of producing livestock.

"Grazing fees are lower again this year because the prices farmers and ranchers received for beef declined while the costs of livestock production increased," Peterson said. "These factors play a prominent role in determining grazing fees under the formula prescribed by law."

Farmers and ranchers will pay about \$9.7 million to graze their livestock on western national forests and grasslands in 1983, Peterson said. Fifty percent of this amount may be appropriated by Congress to maintain and improve national forest rangelands. Twenty-five percent will go to counties where the lands are located and the remainder will go to the U.S Treasury.

#



## **SUGAR IMPORT FEE TO REMAIN AT ZERO FOR FIRST QUARTER 1983**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—Raw sugar imports will remain free of import fees during the next calendar quarter, Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block said today. The zero fee became effective Oct. 1.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is required to make a quarterly determination of import fees under a presidential proclamation issued last May. The import fee for raw sugar will remain at zero cents per pound. The fee for refined sugar, for which trade is very small, will remain one cent per pound.

U.S. sugar prices have been relatively stable since mid-summer, as a result of the border control measures instituted by President Reagan in May, Block said. At that time, foreign sugar was being sold at distress prices because of a heavy world surplus. Despite some slight improvement, the external situation remains very unsatisfactory.

Block said the key factor in the fee determination is the domestic spot price, as reported by the Coffee, Sugar and Cocoa Exchange in New York, during a base period of 20 market days. This is compared to the market stabilization price of 20.73 cents established under the sugar support program for the current crop year. If the average spot price, adjusted to take into account the existing import fee, is above the market stabilization price, the import fee is zero.

The base period for the current fee determination was Nov. 18-Dec. 17. The Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange did not quote a spot price for Nov. 26, the day after Thanksgiving. The average spot price during the base period was 20.8275 cents per pound.

In accordance with the governing proclamation, the import fee for refined sugar and sirups is one cent above the raw sugar fee.

#

## **NOVEMBER FOOD PRICES DECLINE**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—The Consumer Price Index released today indicates retail food prices declined 0.2 percent in November—before seasonal adjustment—according to Assistant Secretary of Agriculture William Leshner.



"Declining food prices reflect larger supplies of many food commodities, and weak consumer demand," Leshner said.

"Prices for food bought in grocery stores fell 0.4 percent in November, the fourth consecutive monthly decline. Prices for food purchased away from home were up 0.2 percent, the smallest rise this year.

"November food prices were 3.4 percent higher than a year earlier," he said. "This reflects 2.7 percent higher prices for grocery store food prices and 4.8 percent higher prices for food away from home. In contrast, prices for nonfood items have risen 4.8 percent over the past year."

Retail prices for fresh fruits were important factors pushing last month's food CPI down. Fresh fruit prices declined 8.9 percent in November as increased supplies and lower prices of apples and oranges offset higher prices of bananas. Prices for fresh vegetables rose 3.7 percent but were still 4.2 percent below November a year ago. The rise was due to higher prices for tomatoes as rains damaged the California crop.

Retail meat prices were down 0.5 percent in November, reflecting increased supplies. Prices for beef and veal fell for the fifth consecutive month and are now 0.2 percent less than a year ago. Retail pork prices were down 1.3 percent, the first decrease since December last year. Also, poultry prices fell 1.7 percent in November, reflecting increased broiler production and special discount prices for Thanksgiving turkeys.

Prices for most other foods showed little or no change. Egg prices fell 0.5 percent. Prices for both dairy products and fats and oils rose 0.1 percent. Prices for cereals and bakery products rose 0.2 percent and prices for sugar and sweets were down 0.1 percent.

The 1982 rise in the food CPI will be the smallest since 1976 and will also be lower than the general inflation rate for the fourth consecutive year. Food price increases this year have been limited by a small rise in the farm value of food and a slowing of food marketing cost increases.

In 1983, retail food price rises will continue to be moderate, averaging in the range of 3 to 6 percent. A smaller overall inflation rate will again be reflected in food marketing costs, particularly in the labor component. The farm value of food is expected to be up 1 to 4

percent, reflecting prospects for only a modest increase in consumer demand.

November Retail Food Prices, Percent Change for Selected Items

Items	October to November		November 1981 to November 1982
	Not seasonally adjusted	Seasonally adjusted	
Percent change			
All food	-0.2	0.1	3.4
Food away from home	0.2	0.4	4.8
Food at home	-0.4	-0.1	2.7
Meats	-0.5	-0.1	5.4
Beef and veal	-0.1	0.5	0.2
Pork	-1.3	-1.3	16.4
Other meats	-0.2	-0.3	4.3
Poultry	-1.7	-0.4	-0.2
Eggs	-0.5	-5.1	-10.1
Fish and seafood	-0.1	0.2	2.1
Dairy products	0.1	*	1.0
Fats and oils	0.1	*	-1.4
Cereals and bakery prods.	0.2	*	3.3
Fruits and vegetables	-1.6	0.0	1.5
Nonalcoholic beverages	-0.3	0.5	3.1
Sugar and sweets	-0.1	*	3.1
Other prepared foods	-0.1	-0.4	2.9

\* A seasonally adjusted index is not available for these items.

## **USDA PROPOSES RULES FOR FEEDING MEXICAN CATTLE IN U.S. FEEDLOTS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials are asking the public to comment on a proposed animal import regulation that would make it easier for cattle feeders to bring Mexican feeder cattle into the United States, feed the cattle here, then return them to Mexico.

John K. Atwell, deputy administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said the proposal would permit female cattle and bulls to enter the United States without brucellosis tests.

Currently steers and calves under six months of age—and cattle for immediate slaughter—are exempt.

Under the proposal, cows, heifers and bulls could move only to approved quarantined feedlots under custom bond, with return directly to Mexico, Atwell said.

In addition, female cattle and bulls imported for feeding under these rules would have to be hot branded with the letter "S"—which stands for slaughter only—and moved under USDA seal to the quarantined feedlot.

On arrival, they would have to be placed in pens under USDA seal and maintained separate from other livestock. At the end of the feeding period, all animals would have to be accounted for and, along with any offspring, moved under seal from the feedlot to Mexico.

Under the proposal, USDA would control cattle movement by requiring import permits. Cattle currently imported from Mexico normally do not require import permits.

However, cattle being imported from Mexico must have health certificates showing they are free from disease; and female cattle and bulls of certain ages have to be tested for brucellosis.

Under the proposal, brucellosis test requirements would be waived, but all cattle—including steers—would have to be tested for tuberculosis and checked for fever ticks at the border.

"USDA granted special permission for two studies on shipping Mexican heifers into the United States under similar procedures this past spring and fall to test the feasibility of the proposed change in import requirements," Atwell said. "Our experience with the test heifers



indicates to us that such imports can be made with minimal disease risk."

Comments on the proposed new rules may be submitted through Feb. 22 to the deputy administrator for veterinary services, APHIS, USDA, room 870 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd., Hyattsville, Md. 20782. The proposal is scheduled to be published in the Dec. 23 Federal Register.

#

## **HEARINGS SET ON PROPOSED PECAN MARKETING ORDER**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has scheduled public hearings at three locations to consider an industry-funded program of research and promotion for pecans produced in 16 states.

The hearings will begin at 9 a.m. local time at the following sites:

- Feb. 8-11, Dallas, Texas, LeBaron Hotel, 1055 Regal Row;
- Feb. 14-16, Atlanta Ga., R.B. Russell Federal Bldg., L.D. Strong Auditorium, Lower Plaza Level, 75 Spring St. S.W;
- Feb. 17-18, Mobile, Ala., Mobile Gas Service Corp. Auditorium, 2828 Dauphine St.

Vern Highley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proposed program would provide for marketing research and development projects for pecans, including promotion and paid advertising. Projects would be financed with assessments on pecans shelled in the continental United States. Assessments would be paid by pecan shellers.

Under the proposal, the production area would include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

A 14-member board of growers, shellers, grower-shellers and a public member would work with USDA in administering the program.



The program would be backed by federal law and would allow agricultural producers and handlers to work together to solve marketing problems. Forty-seven such programs are in effect now for a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and specialty crops like almonds, walnuts and filberts.

Highley said the proposal and request for hearings were submitted to USDA by the Federated Pecan Growers' Association of the United States.

"Pecan production is expected to increase rapidly over the next few years," Highley said. "A voluntary program for marketing research and development projects is in effect, but the industry has indicated a need for a broader financial base to support such programs."

If evidence presented at the hearings supports the program, and if USDA approves, growers currently producing pecans in the designated production area would vote on the proposed program. To become effective, the program would have to be approved by two-thirds of the voting growers, either by number or by the volume of production.

The hearing notice and proposal will be published in the Dec. 22 Federal Register, available at many public libraries. The notice will be mailed to all known pecan growers and shellers. Copies also may be obtained from:

J.S. Miller, chief, Specialty Crops Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250; (202) 447-5697;  
William C. Knope, P.O. Box 9, Lakeland, Fla.; (813) 683-5983;  
David B. Fitz, 320 North Main St., rm. A-103, McAllen, Texas; (512) 682-2833.

#

## **USDA ANNOUNCES WOOL AND MOHAIR SUPPORT PRICES FOR 1983**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21—Support prices for wool and mohair for 1983 marketings will be \$1.53 per pound for shorn wool and \$4.627 per pound for mohair according to Everett Rank, administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation

Service. Mohair is being supported at the same percent of parity as wool, he said.

Pulled wool will continue to be supported at a level comparable to the support price for shorn wool through payments on unshorn lambs, Rank said.

As in past years, shorn wool payments will be based on a percentage of each producer's returns from sales, Rank said. The percentage will be that required to raise the national average price received by all producers for shorn wool in 1983 up to support price of \$1.53 a pound, he said. In 1982 shorn wool prices are expected to average around 75 cents per pound, he said.

Mohair payments will be calculated in a manner similar to wool. After not making any mohair payments for ten years, payments were required for 1981 marketings and projected prices indicate payments will also be necessary for 1982 marketings, Rank said. Mohair prices during 1982 are expected to average around \$2.90 per pound.

#

## **USDA TARGETS CONSERVATION PROGRAMS TO PROBLEM AREAS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—To continue to help meet critical soil erosion and water management problems, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will provide \$31.5 million during fiscal 1983 in "targeted" conservation program funds, according to Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block.

Block said this targeting concept allows federal, state and local governments and farmers themselves to attack the most critical problems, while maintaining conservation practices already established on other lands.

The agricultural conservation program, administered by USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service through the farmer-elected committee system, is a joint effort by government and other groups to restore and protect basic land and water resources. The program will target \$19 million for financial assistance in 29 states.

Block said USDA's Soil Conservation Service will target \$12.5 million to 31 states to attack the same problems by providing additional conservation technical assistance.

"With both ASCS and SCS working together on these problems, we will be bringing all the conservation resources and expertise in the department to bear where the need is greatest and we can get the most for our money," he said.

In granting funds for the program, USDA will emphasize those measures that provide cost-effective solutions to resource problems and will encourage conservation tillage methods to reduce excessive erosion, Block said.

Block said both water management and erosion control measures will emphasize long term agreements covering installation of conservation practices over a period of several years.

Of the \$19 million in agricultural conservation program cost-share assistance, \$13.6 million is allocated for erosion control in 305 counties, \$4.3 million is for water management in 130 counties and \$1.1 million is being held in reserve at the national level.

Of the \$12.5 million for conservation technical assistance, \$10.3 million is allocated for erosion control in 339 counties, and \$2.2 million is for water conservation in 153 counties.

The "targeted" funds are part of the regular appropriations by Congress for the two programs in fiscal 1983.

#

## **USDA PROPOSES EXEMPTING RENDERING PLANTS FROM GARBAGE TREATMENT REGULATIONS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials are proposing to exempt rendering plants from swine health protection regulations scheduled to go into effect Jan. 1.

"The regulations require licensing of, and set standards for, processors who treat food wastes for feeding to swine," said L. W. Schnurrenberger, a veterinary official with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "Renderers fall within this definition, but



there is no need to license them since the rendering process far exceeds USDA treatment standards."

Food wastes to be fed to swine must be treated to destroy any disease organisms. Rendered products such as bone meal, animal protein meals, grease and tallow are produced by cooking food wastes at 240 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for at least one and one-half hours. Schnurrenberger said USDA swine health protection regulations require boiling at 212 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of one-half hour.

Comments on this proposal should be submitted by Jan. 12 to the deputy administrator for veterinary services, APHIS, USDA, room 870, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Rd. Hyattsville, Md. 20782. The proposal is scheduled to be published in the Dec. 23 Federal Register.

#

## **HIDALGO, TEXAS, NAMED PORT OF ENTRY FOR PET BIRDS**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 22—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials have listed Hidalgo, Texas, as a port of entry for imported pet birds to replace Brownsville, which they are proposing to close.

Dr. Samuel S. Richeson, a veterinarian with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said Hidalgo is being opened because it is closer than Brownsville to the facility where birds are held in quarantine.

"USDA's quarantine facility is at Mission, Texas, about 25 miles from Hidalgo, but 80 miles from Brownsville," Richeson said. "It will be much more economical and convenient to bring imported birds through Hidalgo."

Richeson said pet birds from all countries except Canada must pass a minimum 30-day quarantine at port-of-entry facilities. This is necessary to prevent the introduction of exotic Newcastle disease, a highly contagious avian disease that is usually fatal to chickens. Other USDA ports-of-entry are New York, N.Y.; Miami, Fla.; Laredo and El Paso, Texas; Nogales, Ariz.; San Ysidro and Los Angeles, Calif.; and Honolulu, Hawaii.



Richeson said about 45 pet birds will be brought into the country through Hidalgo each year.

The listing of Hidalgo as a pet bird port-of-entry and the proposed closing of Brownsville are scheduled to be published in the Dec. 23 Federal Register. Public comments on these actions may be submitted until Feb. 22, to the deputy administrator for veterinary services, APHIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

#

